ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001564	NA	NA

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S):
Redl, Fritz

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
Who is Delinquent?

6. PUBLICATION TITLE:
NA

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE
YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED
YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED
YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

7. EDITOR(S):
NA

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
NA

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
NA
ORG.
ST.
CITY, STATE
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
NA	NA	NA	6

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR
report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

juvenile delinquents	delinquency detection			
delinquents, therapy				
parent attitudes				

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) Delinquency should be distinguished from "silly pranks" and juvenile crimes Common-sense theories do not provide adequate analysis of delinquent children. Neither the severity of a youth's offense nor his behavior when captured, punished, or corrected is a safe sign of the severity of the delinquent problem involved.

Early detection of delinquency is a good method but nearly always impossible. Wise handling of incidents as they happen is the best solution.

If a child is involved in something or if he develops a peculiar attitude toward school work or authority, parents should be thankful that this pressure in the child has shown some expression. *Parents should not be ashamed of delinquent* troubles in their homes for delinquencies occur at all levels of the socioeconomic strata. Working with the healthy aspects of the child will aid in healing the unhealthy parts of the child. If a symptom disappears too miraculously, something is wrong and advice should be sought. Progress should be slow with expected cycles of regression.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OR PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

REPRINTED BY PERMISSION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PRINTED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED001564

WHO IS DELINQUENT?

by Fritz Redl

A new game has been added to the recreational repertoire of the child-rearing population of our time. It is a game strictly for adults. We might call it the "Let's ask each other what is delinquency" game. I am sure many of you have played it, or have watched others play it - both laymen and experts. I suspect you would like me to play it with you.

Well, I won't. Trying to define "delinquency" is not a game; it is a very important task. And since people are using the term in such a sweeping way, maybe it might pay to pause long enough to mention what I at least do not mean by delinquency.

Let's not extend the word "delinquent" to all silly pranks, even if they backfire. Most youngsters get involved in something like youthful mischief at one time or another. Some of it may be harmless. It may elicit from us hardly more than a strained smile or a somewhat embarrassed recollection of our own escapades. Some of it may be rather uncomfortable, more silly than it need be, or so thoughtless that it really isn't funny at all. Some of it may even backfire and may result in more damage than the silly youngster had meant to produce.

From Pranks to Pathology

Now, I think as you do, that communities should do a lot of planning on ways to keep the silly pranks of normal children and adolescents within harmless limits. All I am suggesting is that this is a problem of a different order and should not be included under the delinquency label.

There is still a difference between "delinquency" and "juvenile crime". Some of the things you read and hear that "delinquents" are doing are so extreme, the problems they represent so severe, that they obviously belong in a chapter on advanced pathology. These actions are in no way comparable to what most people think of when they clamor that something should be done to prevent the rise in "delinquency in our neighborhoods". What do you often read in the papers about offenses committed by young arsonists, rapists, inveterate sadists or about youngsters who suddenly go on a killing spree after having been bottled up for years behind a front of blandly conforming passivity - all that belongs in a chapter of its own. Those youngsters are so sick that "delinquency" is much too loose a label to cover what they do. The same is true of the well-organized but extremely antisocial "young thug in the making". He is really a gangster or criminal who happens to start younger than most such people.

If we slice off "juvenile mischief" at one end of the line and "underaged gangsters and severe mental cases" at the other, what's left? Plenty. But for our purpose here we had better stick to one question:

Please Return To:
CLEARINGHOUSE
CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
ON EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Are there any general guide lines for the parent to follow when he gets worried and asks, "Does this mean that our youngsters are becoming delinquent?"

The trouble they cause is not a safe guide to what causes the trouble. Usually we expect that the seriousness of a youngster's problem can easily be detected from the seriousness of the offense he has committed or from his brazen defiance or penitent cooperation when confronted with his deeds. To most people the youngster who gets mixed up in a gang fight, which ends up with somebody's getting badly hurt or culminates in a wanton orgy of destruction, is a more serious case than the boy who is found hoarding pencils stolen from his little sister and burying them at regular intervals under his favorite tree. Also it is quite understandable that the profusely repentant sinner or the politely grateful receiver of just punishment would be considered a good outlook as compared with the youngster who hits back when apprehended.

Unfortunately everything we have learned through a thorough study of delinquent cases of all varieties proves that these general assumptions are wrong. It is important to know just what youngsters have done and how they act when confronted with capture, punishment, or reprimand. However, this is only one of the things we need to know so as to size up the seriousness of a case. It assumes meaning only after being put together with many more and many other data about the children's lives. There are cases in which the extremeness of an offense or its consequences were the result of unfortunate complicating circumstances and the youngster himself was not really a serious case.

On the other hand, our youngster with the pencil-burying ceremony may need help to learn how to solve life's problems in a less irrational way. Therefore he may actually have to be considered as more seriously disturbed. Similarly any experienced probation officer can cite dozens of cases showing how the most hardened psychopaths often manage to react to their punishments with the most urbanely charming attitutdes of reasonableness and personal grace. A child's "freshness" or his unreasonable attitude toward punishment may seem to be serious. Yet often it is but the attempt of a panicked soul to avoid hearing the voice of guilt and shame from his own conscience.

In short, things are not as simple as our common-sense theories would like to have them. Neither the severity of a youth's offense nor his behavior when captured, punished, or corrected is a safe sign of the severity of the delinquency problem involved.

Early Detection is Tougher than You Think

Among the preventive measures vehemently demanded at delinquency conferences is certainly this one - that parents ought to do more to detect delinquency early. I too would like to see more early detection, I can assure you. Only, the fuzziness and lack of precision with which we bandy this term around is severely blocking a reasonable, efficient approach to the delinquency problem.

Two entirely different meanings are frequently confused in this cry for early detection. By "early" some people are not thinking of time as much as they are of the early stages of the problem. What they mean is that the parents should have done something about Johnny when he was a severe school problem instead of waiting until he ran away and then got into trouble with some older boys who gave him a ride in a stolen car. To other people "early" means early in time. They usually imply that Johnny's car thefts could have been avoided if he had been either thrashed or psychoanalyzed when he first came home from kindergarten with somebody else's toy. Both these concepts of early detection (and also early prevention) have a lot in them. But the real story is again much more complicated.

Some youngsters who are now in trouble did show problems earlier in their lives - problems that could be seen by their parents. But in many cases these children's problems were perfectly normal and had nothing to do with the trouble they are in right now.

It is normal for a three-year-old to ignore blissfully the difference between fantasy and fact and to report imagined events with as much glee as though they really happened. It is normal for a five-year-old to react with irritable vehemence when something intereferes with his sole possession of Father's or Mother's attention. It is normal for an eight-year-old to gain status with his peers by bragging and be quite ready to go much too far in an attempt to avoid being called a "sissy" or "mother's boy". Likewise it is normal for an adolescent girl to adopt for a while a tomboyish attittude before she is ready to accept the full impact of feminine behavior. It is normal for a young adolescent boy to form intimate friendships with his own sex as a defense against being with girls in situations too close to panic and fright.

The fact that your children did such things when they were young and you neither thrashed them nor had them psychoanalyzed does <u>not</u> mean that they will be delinquents. Your three-year-old will not end up as a pathological liar or a passer of false checks. Your five-year-old will not try to do away with his parents or run away from home, and your eight-year-old will not have to become a professional "fence" for a gang of burglars. The tomboy-adolescent girl will not have to spend the rest of her life in sour-grapes contempt of men and the young adolescent boy will not begin to seek the company of homosexuals. Of course there are many problems involved in handling each one of these incidents wisely, but eager "prevention" propagandists are all too likely to misinterpret them.

True, the psychiatrist may show you quite interesting connections between delinquent misdeed and problems in earlier life. Some of these connections, however, are quite invisible to the naked eye and nobody would exppet to see them without a psychiatric microscope. Some youngsters "blow their tops", all right, when they are sixteen, and often seemingly without reason. Yet the earlier problem signs that might have been detected when they were six were not wildness but its opposite: tearful overconformity, soundless submission to obviously stupid forms of punishment, inability to communicate and confess or to seek help when in trouble. Neither parent nor teacher, if asked about the child's being a delinquency risk at that

The disappointing fact is that although in general later events are strongly influenced by what happens early in life, we still know very little about specific items. To predict the effect of what happens to and with Johnny now upon what happens ten years from now is possible only in the most obviously extreme cases. In the average ranges of normal family and neighborhood life, no conscientious expert would want to pretend to much magical skill.

All this should be cleanly and decently admitted by the professionals. Parents, instead of being made to feel guilty about their oversights, should be frankly told that experts, too, might not have known what to predict and what to do.

Wise handling of incidents when they happen is really the best prevention anybody can engage in, expert as well as parent and teacher. The only real answer to the detection problem remains the same as it is in all other forms of disease: hugely increased efforts at full-fledged and well-designed research.

What Can We Do Right Now

A great deal. Let us assume you suddenly find out that your youngster has been "involved in something" or that his attittude toward school, work or authority makes you perk up and wonder whether things aren't going wrong. What's the first thing to do?

Advice No. 1: Keep your educational shirt on. Some delinquent episodes in your youngster's life - and I exclude only the very serious ones from this statement - are a blessing. Without them, how would you know that the formula needs changing? At least you are sure now that you need to do some thinking and replanning and that you aren't just getting jittery, nervous, or fussy yourself. So remember, the discovery that something is about to go wrong, no matter how upsetting for the moment, is probably the luckiest thing that could have happened to you. For if you had missed it much longer, how difficult it would be to get things back to normal!

Advice No. 2: Control your theories. For many years I use to advise parents who came to me with delinquency worries to control their tempers. Amazingly enough, I don't have to do that quite as much any more. Only very tactless, ill-mannered, or sick adults still fly into rages at the discovery of a specific problem in their child's life. But I find now that people's inability to control their theories still blocks the path of reasonable educational and corrective planning. Even highly educated and otherwise well-informed parents, quite capable of counting up to ten as far as Junior directly is concerned, let fly with the most unwarranted, unexamined, or half-baked theories about his behavior and how to stop it!

My advice to you, then, is this: When suddenly confronted with the task of worrying about your youngster, please avoid any theories for the time being. This is not the moment to decide just which part of whose stock of knowledge applies best in your case. Your child is still your

child, a person of a given age, of given characteristics, who is doing right now very unique and very specific things. You have to look at him and what he did long enough to know what is really going on inside and around him.

Advice No. 3: Check up on what is right with him. Let me confess right off the bat that I don't consider a child's assets any excuse whatever for committing delinquent acts, nor does intelligence, ability, or social charm necessarily aid the task of prevention or repair. I know some crooks who know their psychology books, including their own case histories, better than their psychiatrists ever did. I know some youngsters who have a special knack for using all their assets as the main selling point for the rotten side of their character. And I know many parents who lull themselves into a do-nothing attitutde under the cozy blanket of their child's good points.

Two Types of Therapy

When I demand a thorough investigation of what is right with a child I mean something quite different. I think I can show it best by a comparison from the field of medicine. As we all know, some diseases are simply a matter for surgery. The diseased part has to be cut out - of course under very special and skillfully handled circumstances - and that's all there is to it. But many more diseases are not of that nature at all. There is nothing to cut out, or, if there is, cutting it out would never do. Some of these diseases have to be fought indirectly by "supportive therapy". That is, the healthy part of the organism has to be supported by special tricks, so that it can by itself do a better job of fighting off whatever would make it sick without such aid.

Advice No. 4: If a symptom disappears too miraculously, then by all means run to an expert fast. I have seen more youngsters messed up because their parents are too complacent about surface results than because their parents wouldn't even try to tackle a problem. The layman is still in love with quick cures. The real facts are harder to take. If a problem has developed in your child's life over a considerable period of time, or if some extreme behavior outburst has occurred seemingly "out of nowhere", his course of recovery (after you have found the right thing to do) should be slow and gradual. Things ought to get a little better for a while. Then you should expect another outbreak of some trouble or other, or a recurrence of the old. Then things ought to go uphill again for another stretch. After several such phases you may gradually rest assured that the real cause of the original problem is now being taken care of.

Whenever a youngster with a serious problem shows too much of a sudden "miracle change", you should try to find out just where the problem behavior went. For miracles, by the very definition of the term, are rare. If Junior's problems disappear just after you talked with him, thrashed him, or bought him a new football outfit, you have a right to be suspicious. The nearest social agency or child guidance clinic will help you assess what is going on.

Advice No. 5: Stop being ashamed of having "delinquency troubles" in your beautiful home. Many parents are still ashamed to admit to themselves the beginning of delinquent traits in their children because they still assume that delinquency ought to hit only the underprivileged. Research does not uphold such illusions. Like most afflictions, delinquency may strike anywhere. Sometimes it strikes families who could have helped but didn't care enough to try. In most cases, however, things are not that simple. The most conscientiously observant parents, the most enthusiastically devoted teachers, may have a rash of it hit their home or classroom for reasons 'way beyond their grasp. There is nothing to be ashamed of. All you need to do is wake up and start grasping.

> It is from the agencies of law and order, the police and the courts, with all their inadequacies and confused standards and practices, that the young person receives his official label of juvenile delinquent. The young offender carries back to his community the brand of an experience that will remain with him permanently. His experience makes him sure of only one thing: that he is somehow different from, and worse than, other youngsters.
>
> - Joseph D. Lohman
> "Maybe 'Delinquency' Isn't the Right Word"
> National Parent Teacher